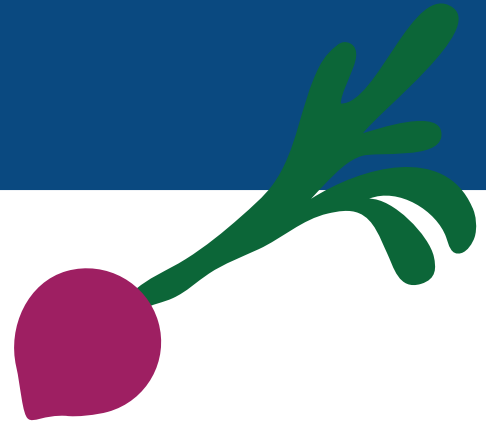




United States Department of Agriculture

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS RESOURCES



USDA'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS (OCFS) seeks to increase the availability of local foods in child nutrition programs, promote hands-on learning activities such as gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes, and encourage the integration of food related education into regular, standards-based curriculum to help children make lifelong healthy eating choices. These strategies deliver positive health and wellness outcomes, while supporting local and regional economic development. USDA supports these efforts through grants, technical assistance, and research. This fact sheet offers an overview of this work.

USDA Farm to School Census

Healthy habits are taking root all across the country. In 2013, USDA conducted the **Farm to School Census**, the first national survey asking school nutrition directors about their participation in farm to school. And in 2015, USDA repeated the Census to understand if farm to school efforts are changing. Results show that **5,254 school districts** operating approximately **42,587 schools** reaching **23.6 million students** are bringing the farm to school! Schools are investing nearly **\$790 million** in local communities through local food purchases, a 105 percent increase over previous results. The **Farm to School Census** tracks the number of schools that include local foods in preschool and summer meals programs. Dig into the **Farm to School Census** to check out national, state, or district level data.



Funding for Community Food Systems

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service operates the **Farm to School Grant Program** which supports schools, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, producers, and Indian Tribal Organizations in implementing and expanding farm to school efforts. From fiscal years 2013–2016, USDA awarded 300 grants, reaching every state, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. In addition to these grants, USDA has a variety of other funding streams that support community food systems. Check out these **fact sheets** for more information:

- [USDA Grants and Loans that Support Farm to School Activities](#)
- [USDA Farm to School Grant Program](#)

All materials are available at www.usda.gov/farmtoschool



Training and Technical Assistance

OCFS offers training and technical assistance on a variety of topics and through multiple mechanisms. One of our primary strategies for institutionalizing this work involves building partnerships and strengthening regional networks. To this end, FNS has seven regional offices around the country. In each office, a staff member is dedicated to supporting farm to school efforts in their region through training, technical assistance, and collaboration. Contact information can be found at www.usda.gov/farmtoschool.

FACT SHEETS

A variety of fact sheets are available and ready for print at www.usda.gov/farmtoschool. The fact sheet collection covers a broad range of topics describing best practices and resources about **Integrating Local Foods into Child Nutrition Programs, Research, School Gardens**, and **Local Meat**, and much more.

The USDA Farm to School Planning Toolkit



Questions and Resources for
Designing a Robust Farm to School Program

PLANNING FOR FARM TO SCHOOL SUCCESS TOOLKIT + WEBINARS

Results of the **2015 Farm to School Census** tell us that 42% of US school districts are actively participating in farm to school, while another 16% of districts don't yet have farm to school programs but are interested in starting one. Whether the task is further developing an existing program or starting a new one, OCFS can help! In 2016, FNS hosted an 11-part **webinar series** that guides districts through the **USDA Farm to School Planning Toolkit**. Served up in bite-sized 30 minute webinars, the presentations offer questions to consider and helpful resources to reference when starting or growing a farm to school program. Guest speakers share their firsthand farm to school experiences.

BUYING LOCAL GUIDE + WEBINARS

The **Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs** guide covers procurement basics, defining local, where to find local products, and the variety of ways child nutrition program operators can purchase locally in accordance with regulations. Throughout the guide, examples illustrate the many mechanisms schools, summer meals programs and child care providers can use to procure local food. FNS hosted a series of webinars to showcase the variety of ways school districts can purchase local foods. The series starts with an introduction to basic procurement principles, and then walks participants through strategies and tactics for buying local foods. The entire series can be viewed **online**.



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The Dirt

News and Notes from FNS's Office of Community Food Systems



E-LETTER

The Office of Community Food System's biweekly E-letter, The Dirt, is the best way to stay up-to-date on all OCFS has to offer, including new resources and **Farm to School Grant Program** updates. Delivered every other Tuesday, the messages contain best practices, webinar info, Census tid bits and grantee stories. Subscribe at www.usda.gov/farmtoschool.



Team Nutrition

FNS's **Team Nutrition** initiative provides free **garden-based nutrition education resources**, including standards-based lessons that integrate nutrition education into core educational subjects. Schools, summer meal sites, and child care programs (centers, homes, and sponsors) that participate in USDA's Child Nutrition Programs may request free printed copies of many of these materials. All materials are available online for free download.

- **Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate** (Preschool)
- **Discover MyPlate: Lesson 4 Planting the Seeds for Healthier Eating** (Kindergarten)
- **The Great Garden Detective Adventure** (Grades 3-4)
- **Dig In! Standards-Based Nutrition Education from the Ground Up** (Grades 5-6)
- **Plant It, Grow It, Eat It!; Healthy Habits Take Root** (Grades K-8)

In addition to garden resources, Team Nutrition offers an extensive **Graphics Library** and **Resource Library** full of posters, stickers, guides, and lesson plans that can help program operators promote healthful eating and physical activity.

Farm to Summer

Summer is a fantastic time of year to add variety, and serve healthy meals that taste great. Across the country, summer meal programs align well with the peak growing season, allowing schools and nonprofit organizations to benefit from increased access to local foods and complementary activities. USDA's Office of Community Food Systems resources support summer meals programs through grants, research, training, and technical assistance. USDA has a dedicated **Farm to Summer webpage** with a **fact sheet**, **policy memo**, videos, webinars and more.



Farm to Preschool

Early childhood is the ideal time to establish healthy eating habits. Farm to preschool efforts work to connect early care and education settings to local food producers with the objectives of serving locally-grown, healthy foods to young children, and providing related food and nutrition education. Incorporating seasonal and locally produced foods is included as a best practice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program meal pattern final rule. To support this work, OCFS has a dedicated **Farm to Preschool webpage** with a **fact sheet**, **policy memo**, and several other resources like **Let's Move Child Care**.

Local Foods in Native Communities

Schools and Native American tribes across the country are incorporating traditional foods like bison, wild rice, and ancient varieties of squash and corn into school meals and providing complementary educational activities that teach students about nutrition and Native American food traditions. USDA supports this work primarily through grants and technical assistance. OCFS hosted a **webinar series** highlighting farm to school efforts in native communities, created a **fact sheet**, and developed a **technical assistance memo** about serving traditional foods.





Policy Memos and Regulations

Policy guidance is one of the main avenues USDA has to clarify federal rules and regulations. The memos outline flexibilities that exist within the regulations, provide examples of how federal funds can be used to support community food systems, and validate best practices.

- **Local Foods and Related Activities in Summer Meal Programs** SP-07-2016, SFSP-07-2016 — This memo provides guidance on the incorporation of local foods and nutrition-based activities into Summer Meal Programs. Published November 12, 2015.
- **Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs** SP 01-2016, CACFP 01-2016, SFSP 01-2016 — This memo outlines the food safety requirements for purchasing and serving poultry, livestock, game and eggs in child nutrition programs. Published October 22, 2015.
- **Child Nutrition Programs and Traditional Foods** TA 01-2015 — Through this memo USDA reinforces that many traditional foods can contribute towards reimbursable meals in CNPs. Published July 15, 2015.
- **Use of State Administrative Expense (SAE) Funds and State Administrative Funds (SAF) for Farm to School Related Expenses** SP 28-2015 — This memo clarifies and highlights the uses of State Administrative Expense (SAE) funds, both as initially allocated and when reallocated, and State Administrative Funds (SAF) for State-level coordination of farm to school activities related to the administration of the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs). Published March 13, 2015.
- **Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program** CACFP 11-2015 — This memo provides guidance on the incorporation of local foods and agriculture-based curriculum in early childhood education and care settings. Published March 13, 2015.
- **Farm to School and School Garden Expenses** SP 06 -2015 — This memo clarifies the flexibility schools have in spending funds on school garden and farm to school efforts. Published November 12, 2014.
- **Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As Part II** SP 03-2013, CACFP 02-2013, SFSP 02-2013 — This memo addresses additional questions regarding application of the geographic preference option and other mechanisms for local procurement. Published October 9, 2012.
- **Final Rule: Geographic Preference Option** — The final rule, published in the Federal Register, includes a summary, background, and final regulatory language, by program, for the geographic preference option. Published April 22, 2011.
- **Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As Part I** SP 18 – 2011 — A memo addressing questions regarding application of the geographic preference option. Published February 1, 2011.
- **School Garden Q&As** SP 32-2009 — This memo clarifies that funds from the nonprofit school food service account can be used to purchase seeds and other supplies for starting and maintaining school gardens. Published July 29, 2009.



For more information, and to sign up for the bi-weekly e-letter from the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems, please visit www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool. Questions? Email us at farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov.

THE
FARM *to* **SCHOOL**
PROGRAM